

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1996



SONG OFFERINGS FROM INDIA

SELECTIONS FROM THE POEMS OF RABINDRANATH
TAGORE OF BENGAL

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH VERSE

GEORGE A. MACKENZIE

TORONTO,
AUGUST, 1913

PK 1718

71687

T24652

The following poems have been paraphrased in verse from English prose translations of some of the remarkable poems of Rabindranath Tagore, a distinguished poet of the present day in Bengal. The prose translations, from the original Bengali, are by the Indian author himself and are, with one exception, contained in a recent volume entitled "Gitanjali—Song Offerings," where they appear without individual titles and designated by numbers only.

SONG OFFERINGS FROM INDIA

I.

THE SLEEP THAT FLITS ON BABY'S EYES.

The sleep that flits on baby's eyes,
Whence does it come? Can you surmise?

Yes! In a cool, deep forest glade,
Where glowworms dimly light the shade,
They tell of a fairy village shy,
Where two enchanted buds hang high;
Thence, borne by fairy fingers, flies
The sleep that kisses baby's eyes.

The smile in his sleep, that will twinkle and go—
Where was it born? Pray, do you know?

Yes! for a rumor floats about—
A rumor—its truth I dare not doubt—
That a crescent moon, with a pale, young ray
Touched a cloudlet's edge, ere it melted away,
And there, in the dream of a dew-washed morn,
Baby's flickering smile was born.

And where was it hidden—that soft, fresh glow
On baby's limbs? Does any one know?

Yes! in a day that is long since fled,
Ere baby's mother was grown and wed,
With the first sweet dawning of love, it stole
Into the depths of her dreaming soul,
And there lay hidden—the soft, fresh rose
That now on the limbs of baby glows.

II.

WHY?

My little darling, when I bring
A gift for you—some painted thing,
Some gaudy little coloured toy—
And mark your eager, childish joy,
Your sweet, exuberant, eager, childish joy,—
I know quite well why summer prints
The flowers with all their lovely tints,
And why the clouds, and waves below,
With ever changing colours glow.

Sometimes I sing to you, my dear,
To make you dance and dry your tear;
Then, when I watch the music's beat
Waken the rhythm of your feet,
The dear, imperfect rhythm of your feet—
I well know why the rippling breeze
Is whispering music in the trees,
And why, to listening earth, the sea
Chants its deep-noted melody.

And when, most excellent of treats,
I fill your chubby hands with sweets,
And watch each morsel as it slips
Between your pretty Cupid lips,
Your little, greedy, pursing, pouting lips—
I know then why the flower holds up
The drop of honey in its cup,
And why the garden's luscious fruit
Draws juicy sweetness from the root.

Or when I kiss you, to beguile
My darling's grave look to a smile,
When I kiss you, love, and trace
The pleasure spreading in your face,
Your dainty, dimpled, rosy, roguish face—
I'm sure I know why morning bright
Sheds joy and gladness with its light,
And why there's such a touch of bliss
In the cool wind's pleasant kiss.

III.

MY SERVANT.

My servant came not, tho' the sun was high:
No water from the well, no meal in view,
My clothes untouched! the hour went by,
And still he did not come! my anger grew.

I fumed: at last he came, and humbly bowed:
Whereat my pent up wrath began to pour;
"Begone, you knave!" I cried aloud,
"Get hence, and let me see your face no more."

He looked at me, and paused, and then replied,
With low and husky voice and head down bent,
"Last night my little daughter died";
Then turned and to his task in silence went.

IV.

THE SWORD.

When thou wast by my side, I longed to deck
Myself with the bright wreath that bound thy neck,
Yet dared not ask; now, like a beggar, I search
For some stray petals of the rose's wreck.

There is not one, not one! and thou hast bade
Farewell, nor any dear love-offering made—
No flowers, nor spices, nor sweet-perfumed vase!
But what is this I find? thy glittering blade!

Ah, cruel love! to mock my heart's desire
With such a gift and such an omen dire!
Thy sword! that is a thunderbolt in weight:
Thy sword! that smiteth like a flame of fire!

What shall I do? Good sooth, I cannot wear
A gem that crushes me: I may not dare
The neighbours' scorn, yet cannot hide the thing:
It wounds me, pressed against my bosom bare.

So let it be, sweet lord! the gift I take,
Its honour and its burden; for thy sake
I'll wear it in this woman's heart of mine,
Even tho' the woman's heart, beneath it, break.

Thou givest me Death for comrade—with my life.
I crown him king; no more shall fear be rife
Within this breast; thy sword shall lead me on
To victory, in all my mortal strife.

With it my lifelong fetters shall be rent;
No smiles and tears and coquetry content
My life henceforth; no doll's adornments now;
This sword shall be my only ornament.

V.

THE BRIDEGROOM.

O Death! the crown, and not the end
 Of life, for thee my yearning eyes
 Keep watch through joys and miseries;
 Come, whisper to me, Death, my friend!
 Thou knowest my hopes, my aims incline,
 My love and longing flow, to thee;
 Then linger not, but look on me;
 One piercing glance and I am thine!
 Haste, Bridegroom, to the loved one's door!
 For thee is woven a garland fair.
 Music and mirth and light are there;
 Haste thee! and when the feast is o'er
 The bride shall leave her home; her own
 Kindred and friends and house alight,
 And pass into the sacred night,
 And meet her wedded lord alone.

VI.

THE PARTING WORD.

When I resign this mortal breath,
 Be this my witness at the last:—
 I've seen what shall not be surpassed,
 Bring what thou wilt with thee, O Death!
 I've sipped the hidden honey-dew
 Of life, the mystic lotus-flower,
 That spreads in splendor and in power
 On tides of glory, out of view.
 Be this my final message too:—
 Playing within this playhouse bright,
 'Mid infinite forms of all delight,
 I've seen the Formless One shine through.
 And I have felt my being stirred,
 Responsive to the touch intense
 Of Him who is beyond all sense
 And touch. Be this my parting word!

VII.

IN HIS PRESENCE.

Lord of my life! Lord of one little life,
And Lord of all the worlds that people space!
Meek and with folded hands,
I stand before Thee face to face.

Silent, alone, beneath the unmeasured arch
Of Heaven's dome, wherein with awe I trace
Thy wisdom and Thy skill—
I stand before Thee face to face.

In this life's labour; in the stress and strife,
The noisy chaffering, the tumult base;
Amid the hurrying throng—
I stand before Thee face to face.

And when my work is done, and good and ill,
O King of kings, commended to Thy grace—
Speechless and all alone,
I'll stand before Thee face to face.

VIII.

THE ETERNAL HOME.

Thee, Infinite God, with my whole being, I greet!
Let all my senses, in abasement meet,
Spread out and touch the world beneath Thy feet.

Let all my mind, like summer rain-cloud bent
Low to the earth with weight of showers unspent,
Bend low to Thee, in worship reverent.

Let all my songs, in their diversity,
Finding one channel to a silent sea,
In voiceless adoration wait on Thee.

Like homesick cranes that seek their mountain nest
With tireless flight, let all my life, in quest
Of its true home, strive to Thy sheltering breast.

